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The Sections of Dharma

Dharmaskandha

Translated into Tibetan by
Prajñāvarman · Yeshé Dé

འཕགས་པ་ཆོས་ཀྱི་ཕུང་པོ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་མདོ།

'phags pa chos kyi phung po zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo

The Noble Great Vehicle Sūtra “The Sections of Dharma”

Āryadharmaskandhanāmamahāyānasūtra



Toh 245

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SUMMARY

- s.1 In this sūtra some of Buddha Śākyamuni's senior disciples request a teaching on the nature of "the sections of Dharma." The Buddha responds by first delivering a teaching on the absence of birth with regard to phenomena, as an antidote to the poison of desire. On that basis, the Buddha then presents a longer explanation of the repulsiveness of the human body, and of the female body in particular.

ac.

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The translation was completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha.

i.

INTRODUCTION

i.1

The Sections of Dharma has a long history as part of the Tibetan Buddhist canon. It was among the first texts brought from India to Tibet during the Imperial period (seventh to ninth century CE) where it was translated by the prolific Tibetan translator Yeshé Dé alongside the Indian preceptor Prajñāvarman. Since it appears in both of the available Imperial catalogs, which are the earliest records of Tibetan scriptural translations,¹ its existence in Tibetan translation can be posited as no later than 824 CE.² Unfortunately, to our knowledge no version of the text is extant in Sanskrit or any other language besides Tibetan (and Mongolian, into which it was translated from the Tibetan), nor are there any known commentaries. This greatly limits our knowledge of its precise origins and context.

i.2

The title of the sūtra refers to the sections of teachings given by the Buddha, which are traditionally said to number 84,000. The sūtra begins with an inquiry by Śāriputra about the nature and number of the sections of the Dharma, to which the Buddha answers with a teaching on the absence of birth with regard to phenomena—a teaching that serves as an antidote to the poison of desire. The beginning of the sūtra thus situates the text explicitly in a Mahāyāna context, introducing as it does the notion that phenomena neither arise nor cease. Indeed, in the manner of the teachings of the second turning,³ the text deconstructs the reality and identity of objects of desire, thereby demonstrating that desires are mere fantasies based on imaginary objects and are not to be indulged in by the wise.

i.3

This second-turning introduction to the problem of desire, however, leads to an extensive discussion of a topic that, due to its emphasis on the elimination of desire as such, would generally be considered a first-turning teaching⁴—namely, the repulsiveness of the human body, and the female body in particular. In its presentation of the female constitution, the sūtra in fact disparages women in a way that most modern readers would find offensive—José Cabezón has aptly described the sūtra as “one of the most

misogynistic texts in the Buddhist canon.”⁵ Nonetheless, recent research has shown that the repulsive nature of the female body was in fact a common theme in early Mahāyāna texts. In their studies of texts dating to the beginning of the common era, Ulrich Pagel (1995), Jan Nattier (2003), and Daniel Boucher (2008) have argued that one major strand of early Mahāyāna involved male monastics eager to engage in demanding ascetic practices. The deprecatory descriptions of the repulsiveness of women’s bodies that form the main argument of *The Sections of Dharma* might have served to support such efforts of male monastics to attain the ideal of renunciation. In this respect, Boucher and Nattier have noted how women were often deprecated and represented as an obstacle to men’s practice in some early Mahāyāna texts, and this very much accords with the tone of the present sūtra.⁶ In fact, according to these scholars, the early Mahāyāna might even have seen a decrease in the participation of women in Buddhist institutions, contrary to a popular modern understanding of the Mahāyāna as a more egalitarian movement than the “mainstream” tradition.⁷ Nevertheless, although this sūtra does in many ways seem to support this analysis, toward the end of the sūtra the Buddha twice describes the intended audience as the fourfold assembly of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen. The sūtra itself, therefore, professes to benefit not only male monastics with its message of the repulsiveness of the human—and, more particularly, the female—body, but really anyone, whether male or female, ordained or lay.

i.4 In spite of such calls for a broad audience, this approach is likely to have resonated most clearly with male monastics, as it represents a Buddhist perspective that runs right from the institutional androcentrism of early monastic Buddhism to the valorization of ascetic discipline in the early Mahāyāna.⁸ The theme common to the present text and those studied by Boucher and Nattier suggests that we might also locate this sūtra among the earlier strata of Mahāyāna sūtras that emerged in the first centuries CE. An interesting difference, however, is *The Sections of Dharma*’s explicit usage of *prajñāpāramitā* themes in its discussion of such concepts as the absence of birth and cessation with regard to phenomena; such themes are absent from the texts studied by Boucher and Nattier. *The Sections of Dharma* therefore seems to belong to a different stream of early Mahāyāna texts: one still centered on monastics, rather than lay bodhisattvas, yet simultaneously inspired by *prajñāpāramitā* themes. This thematic duality is also reflected in the fact that the early imperial catalogs categorized this scripture as a Mahāyāna sūtra, yet the translation colophon in the Stok Palace Kangyur notes that it belongs to the first turning of the wheel of Dharma (*bka’ ’khor lo dang por gtogs pa’o*). Indeed, though it does broach *prajñāpāramitā* concepts, the sūtra is still very much set in the hearers’ monastic context, exemplified

by the fact that the Buddha teaches in the presence of worthy ones (*arhants*), and not bodhisattvas. The sūtra's concluding verse, which states that the Buddha did not expound this teaching to spiritual practitioners, but only to those who still indulged in desires, moreover suggests that the main body of the text is a teaching of provisional meaning, which is meant for beginners on the path and later to be superseded by more advanced teachings. Teachings of provisional meaning are contextual and adapted to the spiritual capacities of their audiences. Since they do not literally expound the ultimate view, they require interpretation.

i.5 One additional theme brought up by this sūtra deserves to be mentioned here. The modern reader may indeed be surprised by several passages describing how various physical and mental ailments that afflict women are caused by parasites (Tib. *srin bu*, Skt. *krimi/kṛmi*) that subsist in different parts of their bodies. According to the sūtra, such parasites are responsible for a host of (mostly undesirable) traits in the female physique. For example, some such parasites are said to live in the urinary tracts of women, where they find nourishment by eating away at their host. The parasites are described as causing women to become mentally disturbed, thus making them engage in uninhibited sexual activity. Other parasites are said to gnaw away at women's brains, noses, throats, and so forth. The sūtra seems to describe the presence of these parasites in the female body as also accounting for the physical traits characteristic of women, such as their absence of facial hair, bulging breasts, and smooth throats.

i.6 Although the descriptions of the parasites that live specifically in the female body may be unique to this sūtra, descriptions of named parasites in the human body in general—some very detailed indeed—are found in several other works in the Kangyur,⁹ and the belief that parasites are the cause of various unpleasant physical conditions was already a well-established theory in Indian medical literature at the time of composition of this text. This notion, which perhaps developed from the observation of worms in decomposing corpses, was already present in the earliest Indic scripture dealing with cures and healing, the *Atharvaveda*, which was composed sometime between 1200–1000 BCE and offers descriptions of various parasites, or, technically, “worms” (*krimi*) that invade the human body.¹⁰ Moreover, Jain and Kāmaśāstra literature, which are closer in temporal proximity to the present sūtra, both include theories of vaginal worms—in the Jain texts these are said to be killed through sexual intercourse, thus making sex an inherently non-virtuous act, and in the Kāmaśāstra literature they are described as causing the “itch” of a woman's sexual desire.¹¹ The sūtra thus offers a presentation of the female physique that draws from a theory of parasites that must have been aligned with

commonly accepted notions of the human constitution in India at that time. It should also be noted that this presentation is in some ways reminiscent of the radical early Buddhist practice, familiar to Buddhist ascetics, of contemplating the stages of decomposition of corpses. That practice is well described in Buddhaghoṣa's *Visuddhimagga* (ch. 6.88), for example, and may have been current in Mahāyāna circles as well, as this sūtra suggests. Buddhaghoṣa's closing statements on this practice in fact parallel the approach and aim of this sūtra when he addresses men's unfounded lust for women's bodies. He writes that "...a living body is just as foul as a dead one, only the characteristic of foulness is not evident in a living body, being hidden by adventitious embellishments."¹²

i.7 This English translation is based on the Degé (*sde dge*) version of the sūtra, in consultation with the textual variations recorded in the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*). Additionally, when the readings in the Degé and the Comparative Edition appeared problematic, we consulted the Stok Palace manuscript. These variant readings, when significant, are indicated in the endnotes.

i.8 Finally, our translation also benefitted from contributions by José Cabezón, who generously shared his draft translation of the entire sūtra with the committee and offered many helpful comments. Selected parts of Cabezón's translation of the sūtra have since been published in his groundbreaking study on sexuality in Indian Buddhism, where the interested reader will find further reflections on this sūtra, and the topics of gender and sexuality in Buddhism in general.¹³

The Noble Great Vehicle Sūtra

The Sections of Dharma

1.

The Translation

[F.27.b]

1.1 Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas!

1.2 Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One was dwelling in Nyagrodha Park, in Kapilavastu, together with a great saṅgha of five hundred monks. At one point venerable Śāriputra, venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana, venerable Mahākāśyapa, venerable Ānanda, and venerable Rāhula all went to see the Blessed One; they prostrated to him, placing their heads at his feet, and then sat to one side. Sitting there, venerable Śāriputra asked the Blessed One, [F.28.a] “Blessed One, you have spoken of ‘sections of the Dharma.’ But what is the extent of those sections of the Dharma to which the Thus-Gone One refers using that expression? How many such sections are there? What are the sections of the Dharma?”

1.3 The Blessed One replied to venerable Śāriputra, “Śāriputra, the Thus-Gone One has taught that there are eighty-four thousand sections of the Dharma. Śāriputra, in this regard, the birthlessness of all phenomena is the primary sense of a section of the Dharma. Śāriputra, I do not claim that there is something called *phenomena*, or that anything whatsoever is born or ceases. Why is that? Śāriputra, it is because all phenomena are characterized as being unborn and unceasing. For example, Śāriputra, paṇḍakas¹⁴ are not called men or women, and should indeed not be said to be men or women. Why is that? Śāriputra, it is because they cannot be designated as men or women. Likewise, Śāriputra, the Thus-Gone One has attained unsurpassed awakening with respect to all phenomena, but one cannot say that he therefore knows phenomena on account of phenomena.

1.4 “As an analogy, Śāriputra, neither paṇḍakas nor ṣaṇḍhas¹⁵ have abandoned passion, but they cannot act on that passion. Śāriputra, when they see a beautiful woman, and desire is aroused, most paṇḍakas and ṣaṇḍhas suffer pain in their ducts.¹⁶ Their ducts drip, their ducts become like

- metal,¹⁷ and their faces become red. Śāriputra, why do you think this is? These paṇḍakas and ṣaṇḍhas have not fainted to the floor; their bodies have not been struck by weapons. Why do you think their ducts are so painful?"
- 1.5 Venerable Śāriputra replied to the Blessed One's question, [F.28.b] "Blessed One, paṇḍakas and ṣaṇḍhas are the guards of ladies' quarters. When they see beautiful women, they give rise to desire. Their desirous minds make them boil with affliction and, boiling with affliction, their bodies become engorged with semen. When they are thus tormented by the pangs of lust, their ducts burst and their bodies become ruined."
- 1.6 Then the Blessed One said to venerable Śāriputra, "Śāriputra, few among paṇḍakas or ṣaṇḍhas take rebirth in the world of the happy destinies of the higher realms. Most of them are reborn as hell beings. Śāriputra, observe the contrast with the sons¹⁸ of the Śākya ascetic, none of whom get carried away by desire. Why is that? They know that the sense pleasures are without substance. Knowing that the sense pleasures are impure, they are weary and disenchanted with them. With this deep dislike, they observe celibacy, and their complexions are bright.
- 1.7 "Śāriputra, evil men are unable to feel weary or disenchanted. Why is that? Śāriputra, it is because evil men, thinking so much about objects of desire as they do, are full of thoughts. Śāriputra, what are the thoughts of evil men? They think of things that are non-existent. They think of the impure as pure. They think of lack of perception as perception. They think of women as women. They think of being desirous as being desirous. These, Śāriputra, are the thoughts of evil men. Śāriputra, these are the actions of paṇḍakas and ṣaṇḍhas who are gripped by desire; they are not the actions of holy beings. Śāriputra, those paṇḍakas who thus entertain evil men's conceptions [F.29.a] have the experience, 'I am touching that,' and thus perceive the body with its nine orifices—this impure, leaking thing—as clean. All these things should not be done. They are not the actions of holy beings.
- 1.8 "Śāriputra, those ascetics and brahmins who do not recognize the flaws of the sense pleasures for what they really are fantasize about women and cling to certain features of their eyes, perceiving them to be like beryl. They do not see them as bubbles of water. Śāriputra, compare this to the example of a jenny or a sow that has just given birth. Her body is emptied by giving birth and a filthy, excrement-like placenta, unbearable to look at, emerges from her body. Śāriputra, eyes, too, ought to be described like that. The eyes resemble the placenta of a jenny, a sow, or a bitch. The interior of the eyeball is like a water bubble. That is why filth emerges from it, and it is therefore disagreeable. Pus and blood ooze from it—it exudes filth. Śāriputra, the bodily formation that leaks filth, pus, and blood, and that leaks essential fluids, that thing is called the eye.

- 1.9 “Śāriputra, what is the reason for speaking of the eyes? What are the causes and conditions for their being called *eyes*? They are the leaders of the body. Looking at form, one is never satisfied—whether at first, in the middle, or in the end—and therefore one physically engages in an ocean of non-virtuous deeds. Because of that we speak of eyes.¹⁹ Why is that, Śāriputra? What are the causes and conditions for speaking of eyes? It is because they are disagreeable. Śāriputra, why are the eyes disagreeable? They see the absence of form as form, the absence of sensation as sensation, the absence of perception as perception, the absence of formation as formation, and the absence of consciousness as consciousness. Again, what is the reason for this? That is, what are the causes and conditions for speaking of eyes? [F.29.b] They cause one’s virtuous conduct to degenerate, and therefore we speak of eyes. They cause monkhood to degenerate, and therefore we speak of eyes. Śāriputra, eyes are impermanent, unstable, and do not endure. That is why they should be known as eyes.
- 1.10 “Śāriputra, skilled, well-learned, and dauntless monks relate to the eyes in this way: eyes are not a woman, not a man, not a sentient being, not a life principle, not a living being, and not a person. Likewise, Śāriputra, this applies to the ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. They are also not a woman, not a man, not a sentient being, not a life principle, not a living being, and not a person. These all arise from being mistaken about the five aggregates.
- 1.11 “Śāriputra, those ascetics and brahmins who do not correctly know the shortcomings of the sense pleasures are tormented by lust. Their complexions become poor and pale. Śāriputra, consider this analogy: When the leaves or the ripe fruits of a big tree fall off, they lose their luster. In the same way, Śāriputra, those among monks and nuns, and male and female lay devotees, who do not correctly know the shortcomings of the sense pleasures are tormented by lust. Their complexions become poor, their thoughts become unclear, and their poor complexions become unpleasant to look at.
- 1.12 “Śāriputra, young monks who are ordained in the prime of their lives will soon correctly know the sense pleasures, understanding that the sense pleasures lack substance. Even if they have thoughts of desire, they quickly pacify them, recognizing them as being non-virtuous. Śāriputra, that being the case, once monks have seen the shortcomings of the sense pleasures, they are disenchanted and free from desire. They then truly rejoice and practice pure conduct. [F.30.a] Their complexions become radiant.
- 1.13 “Śāriputra, consider this analogy: When pus develops in the body of a sick person, eighty-four thousand sores open up on all of that person’s limbs²⁰ and each open sore also harbors eighty-four thousand swarms of parasites.²¹

These parasites have both beaks and mouths. No matter how much they eat, they are never satiated. If that person sits near a heap of embers,²² the more those creatures are tormented by burning, the more they eat. Now, what do you think about that, Śāriputra? As they consume that person, will those creatures eat the person up, or not?”

1.14 Venerable Śāriputra replied to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, if even to hear this makes my hair stand on end, it goes without saying how unpleasant it must be for that person. Blessed One, that person will certainly be eaten up by those varieties of creatures—nothing will be left uneaten. Those eighty-four thousand creatures make the body itch and, in that way, give that person no peace. They bring that person no happiness.”

1.15 “Śāriputra, what do you think? That person’s body leaks pus and blood—should that state of affairs be despised?”

“It is indeed something to despise, it is indeed disagreeable, it is indeed not something worthy of being looked upon.”

1.16 “Similarly, Śāriputra, skilled monks train correctly by contemplating as follows: ‘The Blessed One has said that women are filthy, foul-smelling, disagreeable, and not worthy of being looked upon. Women, boiling with afflictive emotions, should not be kept company with. Desires too are foul-smelling, disagreeable, and not worthy of being looked upon.’ [F.30.b]

1.17 “Śāriputra, women’s bodies harbor an additional five groups of parasites that are different from those on men’s bodies. Śāriputra, these five groups of parasites live in their urinary tracts. Each group of parasites has its own respective eighty parasites that have both beaks and mouths. These parasites constantly eat away at women’s bodies. That is why women, incited by the afflictions, engage in sexual misconduct, and yet, when they engage in their passions, they find no satisfaction.

1.18 “Therefore, Śāriputra, if one sees the sense pleasures as being ridden with faults, one will be disenchanted and free from desire. One will then engage in pure conduct with delight, and one’s complexion will glow. Śāriputra, this is the Dharma teaching that begins with a section on the sense pleasures. Śāriputra, one should be disenchanted with indulgence in passion.

1.19 “Now Śāriputra, what is defilement? Śāriputra, defilement is one’s own doing. Śāriputra, what are purification and pacification? Śāriputra, purification and pacification are also one’s own doing. Śāriputra, what is defilement and what is one’s own doing? They are the obsession with perceiving things as phenomena. What is the obsession with perceiving things as phenomena? It is to be obsessed with perceiving things as being born and as ceasing, and perceiving things as having a self, as not having a self, or as being the self. This is the section of Dharma spoken by the Blessed One.

- 1.20 “Śāriputra, childish, ordinary beings are blind and thus conceptualize the form aggregate. They also conceptualize the aggregates of sensation, perception, formation, and consciousness. But conceptualizing is bondage. Not to form concepts is to be liberated. Śāriputra, whoever conceptualizes will take on the form aggregate. [F.31.a]
- 1.21 “Śāriputra, there are ten misfortunes that befall someone whose discipline has lapsed. What are the ten? Lapsed discipline will torment one at the time of death. A monk whose discipline has lapsed will feel regret. Saying, ‘I am going to go to the hell of unrelenting torment!’ the monk will be afraid to stay among the assembly. The monk will think, ‘I am disparaging the discipline! The buddhas have forsaken me, the hearers have forsaken me, the gods have forsaken me!’ He will be fearful at death, go to the lower realms, and a human body will be difficult to obtain. Śāriputra, these are the misfortunes of a monk whose discipline has lapsed—one whose discipline has lapsed will suffer torment at the time of death.
- 1.22 “Śāriputra, since that is the case, you should come to perceive sense pleasures as ridden with faults. Śāriputra, that means that whether a monk dwells in the forest, at the base of a tree, in an abandoned building, or out in the open, he should train himself by thinking, ‘The sense pleasures are foul-smelling. The sense pleasures are disagreeable. The sense pleasures are like an open wound. The sense pleasures are not worthy of being looked upon. The sense pleasures are despicable. The sense pleasures are like a corpse filled to the brim with excrement!’ The sense pleasures are objects of excitement for the childish. Śāriputra, enough of enjoying women sexually and pleasing them!
- 1.23 “Śāriputra, a woman’s body is completely filled with feces and spittle—who would enjoy that? Śāriputra, their bodies are to be despised just like the rotten corpse of an ordinary dog. Indeed, Śāriputra, as an analogy consider a filthy, rotten, and foul-smelling corpse of a dog with repulsive, dark bluish-green skin, completely full of maggots, lying on a roadside. Rain falls on the corpse and the wind tosses it about. Then some people arrive there, circling around the corpse, and catch a whiff of its smell. When that happens, Śāriputra, what do you think? [F.31.b] Will they sniff at its stench or not?”
- “O Blessed One, certainly not!” exclaimed Śāriputra.
- 1.24 The Blessed One then asked venerable Śāriputra, “So what do you think, Śāriputra? If someone touched²³ the corpse of that dog, if he shook it, if he enjoyed himself with it, would he be praised by many people?”
- “Such a person would be difficult even to look at—how could he ever be praised?” replied venerable Śāriputra.

1.25 The Blessed One then said to venerable Śāriputra, “Śāriputra, the thus-gone ones might praise the person who embraces, shakes, and enjoys himself with that dog’s corpse. However, they would not praise a person who, even with just his toe, touches a woman, even if she is the beauty of the land, sixteen years old, an excellent woman, with a beautiful form, who is lovely to behold, with delightful full breasts, adorned with jewelry, youthful, pleasant to touch, and free of disease. Śāriputra, a person who touches such a beauty of the land with even just his toe is despicable, unlike the one who embraces, shakes, and enjoys himself with that dog’s corpse. Śāriputra, what do you think about this? By embracing or touching a dog’s corpse, will sentient beings end up being born in the hell realms?”

“No, Blessed One, they will not.”

1.26 “Śāriputra, monks must develop the perception of the faults of the sense pleasures in the following way. Śāriputra, how should monks develop the perception of the faults of the body? Śāriputra, this body is very harmful and troublesome. [F.32.a] Śāriputra, women’s bodies have twenty-five more groups of parasites that are not like the ones present in men’s bodies. Śāriputra, there are masses of parasites in women’s brains. Known as the *robbers*, they eat the brains of women. Śāriputra, there are masses of parasites in women’s noses. Known as the *mouth terminators*, they eat women’s moustaches, thus preventing them from growing. Śāriputra, there are masses of parasites in women’s ears. Known as the *eaters*, they eat and pierce the ears of women.

1.27 “Śāriputra, there are masses of parasites on the sides of women’s necks and heads. Known as the *yearners*, they eat and pierce the ears of women and make their eyes sharp. Śāriputra, they don’t prick the ears of men but only those of women. Śāriputra, there are masses of parasites on women’s bodies. Known as the *obstructors*,²⁴ they incessantly eat women’s mouths. That is why the throats of women are flat, unlike those of men. As soon as women put food or drink in their mouths, the parasites are the first to eat. They then deposit their waste inside women’s breasts, making their breasts hang down. Whenever women become pregnant, the parasites also become pregnant. That is why there is so much milk in women’s breasts.

1.28 “Śāriputra, inside the part of women’s bodies where the womb lies, there are destructive parasites known as the *mighty exterminators*. They kill and eat the parasites known as the *lickers*. If they cannot find any of the parasites known as the *lickers*, they too will die. Pregnancy comes about from the death, and thus the absence, of those two types of parasites, in addition to the union of mother and father. Śāriputra, in the birth canal inside women’s bodies, there are four hosts of parasites that are known as the *great lips*, [F.32.b] the *lump concealers*, the *wind expellers*, and the *desire catchers*. They

incessantly eat at the bodies of women. Because of this, women are completely ablaze with afflictions, yet are never satisfied by indulging in their desires. Consequently, knowing that women have such great faults, the Thus-Gone One added additional rules to the fundamental precepts.²⁵

1.29 “Śāriputra, you should teach this Dharma discourse on the sections of Dharma over and over again to the four assemblies.²⁶ Why? So that they will come to know that the body and the sense pleasures are to be despised. Śāriputra, knowing this body to be a fabrication, apart from immature, ordinary beings with no education, no one would continue clinging to the sense pleasures—it would be impossible. Śāriputra, that being the case, you should not be fond of this body. In particular, do not be attached to it.” Thus spoke the Blessed One.

1.30 After the Well-Gone One had uttered those words, the Teacher continued, saying the following:

“These bodies that arise from filth
Are always home to many creatures.
Filled to the brim with urine and excrement,
It is to these that immature beings cling.

1.31 “Monks and nuns,
Laymen and laywomen,
Upon hearing this, let go of their desire.
Free from desire, they are liberated.

1.32 “To practitioners of the Dharma
I did not teach these faults.
It is to whomever indulges in desires
That I explained these faults.

1.33 “Just as the Buddha has taught,
Once those who fantasize upon seeing women
Understand this genuine encouragement,
Those wise ones will no longer have such thoughts.”

1.34 After the Blessed One had spoken these words, venerable Śāriputra, together with the whole world and its gods, humans, and demigods, rejoiced and praised the teaching of the Blessed One.

1.35 *This concludes the Noble Great Vehicle Sūtra “The Sections of Dharma.”* [F.33.a]

c.

Colophon

- c.1 The Indian preceptor Prajñāvarman and the chief editor-translator, Bandé Yeshé Dé, translated, edited, and finalized this work.

ab.

ABBREVIATIONS

Kangyur Editions:

C Choné

D Degé

H Lhasa (Zhol)

J Lithang

K Kangxi Peking

K_Y Yongle

N Narthang

S Stok Palace

U Urga

n.

NOTES

- n.1 It appears in the Denkarma (*ldan dkar ma*) catalog (folio 299.a.6), numbered in Yoshimura (1950), p. 195.e, as text no. 193; in the Phangthangma (*'phang thang ma*) catalog, it's numbered in Halkias (2004), p. 66, as no. 272.
- n.2 The date of the earliest Imperial catalog, the Denkarma, is debated, but this is the later of the two dates most commonly attributed among scholars, the other being 812 CE. See Halkias (2004), p. 3.
- n.3 According to later Indian (and even later, Tibetan) doxography that first finds clear expression in the *Samādhinirmocanasūtra*, the Dharma taught by the Buddha can be classified into three distinct doctrinal groupings called the *three turnings of the wheel of the doctrine*. According to this schema, the second turning focuses primarily on the emptiness of phenomena.
- n.4 The first turning refers mainly to the four noble truths, as well as to teachings on the five aggregates. Mahāyāna exegetes considered these to be teachings of the hearers, and therefore classified them as teachings of provisional, as opposed to definitive, meaning. See Powers (2013), p. 103.
- n.5 Cabezón (2017), p. 125, no. 328.
- n.6 Boucher (2008), pp. 50–52; Nattier (2003), pp. 96–100.
- n.7 Nattier (2003), p. 98.
- n.8 Boucher (2008), pp. 51–52.
- n.9 See, for example, the *Vinayaḥśudrakavastu* (Toh 6), second vol. (10), F.138.a *et seq.* (translation in Jamspal and Fischer, 84000, forthcoming), and *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthāna* (Toh 287), fourth vol. (71), F.117.b *et seq.* (translation in Dharmachakra Translation Committee, 84000, forthcoming).

- n.10 Zysk (1993), p. 64.
- n.11 Thanks to José Cabezón for bringing this to our attention. See further Cabezón (2017), p. 125, no. 328.
- n.12 Cited in Chapple (2013), p. 92.
- n.13 Cabezón (2017).
- n.14 Tib. *ma ning*; Skt. *pañḍaka*. We have chosen to leave this term untranslated here as no English term seems to cover the full semantic range of the original Sanskrit. Given that we are here in the context of someone who cannot be identified as either a man or a woman, the meaning could perhaps in this context be “neuter.” It seems, however, that in other contexts the term may have a broader range of meaning, or even a somewhat different meaning. Engle (2009, p. 437, no. 562) explains the term as referring to a man or a woman who has a functioning but somehow deficient sexual faculty, such as someone who only experiences arousal intermittently. See also the canonical description from the *Vinayavastu* in Miller 2018 (4.109 (<http://read.84000.co/translation/toh1-1.html#UT22084-001-001-1616>)).
- n.15 Tib. *za ma*; Skt. *ṣaṇḍha*. This term can have a wider range, including those who are, for any number of reasons, sexually impotent. We have chosen to leave this term untranslated here as no English term seems to cover the full semantic range of the original Sanskrit. Engle (2009, p. 437, no. 562) translates the term as a “sexually deficient person” and notes that the term refers to a person who lacks a sexual faculty and therefore cannot perform sexually. Engle specifies that this refers to eunuchs, but also those with a congenital abnormality, or who suffer from impotence due to any number of causes.
- n.16 Tib. *byin pa*. This term literally means “calf,” as in the calf of the leg, which does not make sense in this context. Although all versions of the text consulted read *byin pa*, it is possible that a better reading would be *’byin pa*. Reading *’byin pa* here in the sense of “gate” or “egress” (*niḥsaraṇa*; see the *Mahāvīyutpatti*), we have translated it as *ducts*, and understand it to refer to the urethra or other sexual ducts in the case of either a castrated or uncastrated *pañḍaka* or *ṣaṇḍha*. We are grateful to José Cabezón for suggesting this possible alternative reading and its interpretation. See also Cabezón (2017) p. 414, no. 1039.
- n.17 Tib. *khar ba*, which can refer to bell-metal, an alloy of copper and zinc, here presumably denoting hardness. Alternatively, *khar ba*, or more often *’khar ba*, can mean a staff or walking stick.

- n.18 “Sons” here means spiritual sons, i.e. disciples or followers, rather than biological offspring.
- n.19 The Sanskrit word for “eye” (*netra*), can also mean “leader” or “guide.”
- n.20 Tib. *yan lag dang nying lag*: the major limbs (head, arms, and legs) and minor limbs (fingers, toes, nose, ears, etc.).
- n.21 Tib. *srin bu'i tshogs*. The term *srin bu* (Skt. *kṛmi*) refers to any number of types of worms, insects, or bugs. We have chosen to translate it here as “parasite” given the context, particularly below in the text, where these *srin bu* are said to inhabit various internal organs in the female body.
- n.22 Tib. *de mdag ma spungs pa'i drung du 'dug na*. Note that the Comparative Edition incorrectly reads *ma dag*.
- n.23 Here we follow K_Y, K, C, and U which read *reg*, rather than D which reads *rig*.
- n.24 Tentative translation. The Tibetan reads *a ba re ban*, which we have been unable to identify. Here we have chosen to read the word as a transcription of *āvaraṇa*, meaning “hindrance” or “obstruction.”
- n.25 Reading *dang bca' ba* as *dang bcas pa*. When the female renunciate order was established, a number of additional precepts were added that ordained nuns must follow. These precepts, which subordinate female monastics to the supervision of the male ordained community, were most likely added to alleviate opposition in the male ordained community, and Indian society at large, to the inclusion of women in the order.
- n.26 This refers to the assemblies of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen.

b.

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GLOSSARY

· Types of attestation for Sanskrit names and terms ·

AS	<i>Attested in source text</i> This term is attested in the Sanskrit manuscript used as a source for this translation.
AO	<i>Attested in other text</i> This term is attested in other Sanskrit manuscripts of the Kangyur or Tengyur.
AD	<i>Attested in dictionary</i> This term is attested in Tibetan-Sanskrit dictionaries.
AA	<i>Approximate attestation</i> The attestation of this name is approximate. It is based on other names where Tibetan-Sanskrit relationship is attested in dictionaries or other manuscripts.
RP	<i>Reconstruction from Tibetan phonetic rendering</i> This term is a reconstruction based on the Tibetan phonetic rendering of the term.
RS	<i>Reconstruction from Tibetan semantic rendering</i> This term is a reconstruction based on the semantics of the Tibetan translation.
SU	<i>Source Unspecified</i> This term has been supplied from an unspecified source, which most often is a widely trusted dictionary.

g.1 aggregates

phung po

ཐུང་པོ།

skandha

The five aggregates of form, sensation, perception, formation, and consciousness. On the individual level the five aggregates refer to the basis upon which the mistaken idea of a self is projected.

g.2 Ānanda

kun dga' bo

ཀུན་དགའ་བོ།

ānanda

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A major śrāvaka disciple and personal attendant of the Buddha Śākyamuni during the last twenty-five years of his life. He was a cousin of the Buddha (according to the Mahāvastu, he was a son of Śuklodana, one of the brothers of King Śuddhodana, which means he was a brother of Devadatta; other sources say he was a son of Amṛtodana, another brother of King Śuddhodana, which means he would have been a brother of Aniruddha).

Ānanda, having always been in the Buddha's presence, is said to have memorized all the teachings he heard and is celebrated for having recited all the Buddha's teachings by memory at the first council of the Buddhist saṅgha, thus preserving the teachings after the Buddha's parinirvāṇa. The phrase "Thus did I hear at one time," found at the beginning of the sūtras, usually stands for his recitation of the teachings. He became a patriarch after the passing of Mahākāśyapa.

g.3 birthlessness

skye ba med pa

སྐྱེ་བ་མེད་པ།

ajātakatvā

The state of not having arisen, begun, or been born.

g.4 desire catchers

'dod len

འདོད་ལེན།

—

One of the four parasites that are said to be inside the birth canals of women.

g.5 Dharma discourse

chos kyi rnam grangs

ཆོས་ཀྱི་རྣམ་གྲངས།

dharmaparyāya

g.6

eaters

za bar byed

ཟ་བར་བྱེད།

—

The parasites that are said to live in the ears of women.

g.7

great lips

mchu mchog

མཚུ་མཚོག།

—

One of the four parasites that are said to be inside the birth canals of women.

g.8

hearer

nyan thos

ཉན་ཐོས།

śrāvaka

Someone who practices according to the Vehicle of the Hearers (those who hear the teachings from others).

g.9

Kapilavastu

ser skya gnas

ཤེར་སྐྱ་གནས།

kapilavastu

The city in which Buddha Śākyamuni was born, located in present day southern Nepal.

g.10

lickers

mb tu ldag byed

འབ་ཏུ་ལྷག་བྱེད།

—

Parasites that are said to live inside women's wombs.

g.11

lump concealers

gong bu sped

གོང་བུ་སྐེད།

—

One of the four parasites that are said to be inside the birth canals of women.

g.12 Mahākāśyapa

'od srung chen po

འོད་སྤྱང་ཆེན་པོ།

mahākāśyapa

One of the Buddha's foremost disciples.

g.13 Mahāmaudgalyāyana

maud gal gyi bu

མོད་གལ་གྱི་བུ།

maudgalyāyana

One of the Buddha's foremost disciples.

g.14 mighty exterminators

zad par byed pa dpa' ba

ཟད་པར་བྱེད་པ་དཔའ་བ།

—

Parasites that are said to live inside women's wombs.

g.15 monk

dge slong

དགེ་སྤྱོད་།

bhikṣu

A fully ordained male practitioner.

g.16 mouth terminators

kha rdzogs

ཁ་རྩོག་ས།

—

Parasites that are said to live in the noses of women.

g.17 nun

dge slong ma

དགེ་སྤྱོད་མ།

bhikṣuṇī

A fully ordained female practitioner.

g.18 Nyagrodha Park

shing nya gro dha'i kun dga' ra ba

ཤིང་ཉ་གྲོ་རྒྱའི་ཀུན་དགའ་ར་བ།

nyagrodhārāma

A grove of banyan trees (Skt. *nyagrodha*, Tib. *nya gro dha*) near Kapilavastu where the Buddha sometimes took residence. It was a gift to the Buddhist community by King Śuddhodana, the father of the Buddha.

g.19 paṇḍaka

ma ning

མ་ནིང་།

paṇḍaka

A person who either has no sexual organs, degenerated sexual organs, or the organs of both sexes.

See also [n.14](#).

g.20 parasite

srin bu

སྲིན་བུ།

krimi · kṛmi

According to classical Indian medical literature, the human body is filled with various parasitic beings (literally “worms”) that live off the body.

See also [n.21](#).

g.21 Prajñāvarman

pra dz+nyA bar ma

པ་རྒྱ་མཁེ་མ།

prajñāvarman

An Indian Bengali paṇḍita resident in Tibet during the late eighth and early ninth centuries. Arriving in Tibet on an invitation from the Tibetan king, he assisted in the translation of numerous canonical scriptures. He is also the author of a few philosophical commentaries contained in the Tibetan Tengyur (*bstan 'gyur*) collection.

g.22 pure conduct

tshangs par spyad pa spyod pa

ཚངས་པར་སྦྱང་བ་སྦྱང་བ།

brahmacarya

The practice of celibacy or a chaste sexual behavior; this lifestyle also entails different spiritual practices.

g.23 Rāhula

sgra gcan zin

སྣ་གཅན་ཟེན།

rāhula

Rāhula is the name of Śākyamuni Buddha's physical son. Edgerton reports from different sources that he miraculously descended from Tuṣita heaven into his mother's womb, and insisted on becoming a monk when he found out that the Buddha was his father. He was ordained by Śāriputra.

g.24 robbers

phrog byed

ཕྱོག་བྱེད།

—

The parasites that are said to live in the brains of women.

g.25 ṣaṇḍha

za ma

ཟ་མ།

ṣaṇḍha

Someone whose sexual organs (or part of them) have been removed, or who is sexually impotent for some other reason; sometimes synonym to *ma ning* (see entry “paṇḍaka”).

See also [n.15](#).

g.26 Śāriputra

shA ri'i bu

ཤ་རིའི་བུ།

śāriputra

One of the closest disciples of the Buddha, known for his pure observance of discipline.

g.27 wind expellers

rlung 'byin

ལྷ་འབྱུང་།

—

One of the four parasites that are said to be inside the birth canals of women.

g.28 worthy one

dgra bcom pa

དགྲ་བཙུག་པ།

arhant

The fourth of the four results attainable by a hearer. One who has eliminated all afflictions and personally ended the cycle of rebirth.

g.29 yearners

zhen byed

ཞེན་བྱེད།

—

Parasites that are said to live on the sides of women's necks and heads.

g.30 Yeshé Dé

ye shes sde

ཡེ་ཤེས་སྡེ།

—

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Yeshé Dé (late eighth to early ninth century) was the most prolific translator of sūtras into Tibetan. Altogether he is credited with the translation of more than one hundred sixty sūtra translations and more than one hundred additional translations, mostly on tantric topics. In spite of Yeshé Dé's great importance for the propagation of Buddhism in Tibet during the imperial era, only a few biographical details about this figure are known. Later sources describe him as a student of the Indian teacher Padmasambhava, and he is also credited with teaching both sūtra and tantra widely to students of his own. He was also known as Nanam Yeshé Dé, from the Nanam (*sna nam*) clan.

